

Message Text

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STADIS/////////
FOR AMB. FROM DRAPER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR PBOR XF LE

SUBJECT: AMIN AL HAFEZ AND STATEMENT RE PALESTINIANS

REF: BEIRUT 1218

1. YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT ATHERTON WAS MOST CIRCUM-
SPECT WHEN DEALING WITH AMIN AL-HAFEZ ON THE ISSUE OF
PALESTINIAN RESETTLEMENT IN LEBANON. WHEN AMIN ADVANCED
THE NOTION, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT A GREATER NUMBER OF PALES-
TINIANS THAN THE 50,000 MENTIONED BY THE CHRISTIANS MIGHT
BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN LEBANON MORE OR LESS PERMANENTLY,
ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY WOULD NOT ENJOY LEBANESE
CITIZENSHIP, ATHERTON MADE CLEAR HIS INTEREST IN THESE RE-
MARKS BUT DID NOT RPT NOT SAY THAT THE U.S. MIGHT AGREE.
SIMILARLY, WHEN AMIN MENTIONED THAT PERHAPS PART OF THE
GENERAL PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN THE MIDDLE EAST COULD BE
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RESOLVED WITH OPEN BORDERS AND THE MOVEMENT OF PALESTINIANS
TO SOURCES OF EMPLOYMENT, ATHERTON NODDED HIS UNDERSTANDING
BUT, AGAIN, AVOIDED EXPLICIT COMMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT
THIS MIGHT ALSO BE AN ELEMENT IN OUR OWN THINKING (WHICH
IT IS). ATHERTON'S BASIC THRUST THROUGHOUT THIS CONVER-
SATION WAS TO POINT OUT THAT IT WAS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT
THE WEST BANK AND GAZA COULD ABSORB ALL THE PALESTINIANS

IN THE DIASPORA AND THAT A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EFFORT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM.

2. AMIN CONCLUDED THE MEETING WITH AN EXPRESSION OF HIS FEARS THAT LEBANON MIGHT BE HURT IN A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT, IN THE TWO SENSES OF ISRAELI ECONOMIC COMPETITION AND A PARTIAL SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE WHICH WOULD LEAVE UNSATISFIED PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON. IT WAS AT THAT POINT THAT ATHERTON SAID THAT HE COULD NOT CONCEIVE OF AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD NOT BE OF POSITIVE BENEFIT TO LEBANON. HE SAID HE RECOGNIZED LEBANON'S CONCERNS, HOWEVER, AND SAID THAT WE WOULD LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT INTENDED TO REASSURE THE LEBANESE THAT A FINAL SETTLEMENT WOULD NOT BE AT THE EXPENSE OF LEBANON OR ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS AND WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ITS CONCERNS.

3. IT IS MISLEADING FOR AMIN TO HAVE SAID (BEIRUT 1185) THAT WE HAD NO INTENTION OF SETTLING PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON. TO RPT, ATHERTON WAS NOT EXPLICIT ABOUT THE POSSIBLE PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT OF ANY OR ALL PALESTINIANS NOW IN LEBANON. IT WAS OF COURSE CLEAR FROM THE THRUST OF ATHERTON'S REMARKS THAT WE HAD NO RPT NO INTEREST IN RESETTLING IN LEBANON PALESTINIANS WHO ARE NOW OUTSIDE LEBANON.

4. AS YOU KNOW, WHEN WE START THINKING OF OPPORTUNITIES
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TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT, WE USUALLY THINK IN TERMS OF LEBANESE NATIONAL OCCASIONS. THE IMPORTANT STATEMENT WE ISSUED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF SARKIS IS AN EXAMPLE. IF A NEW CABINET WERE FORMED IN THE EARLY FUTURE, THAT MIGHT OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A STATEMENT UNDERLINING OUR SUPPORT FOR LEBANON, FEEDING INTO IT A STATEMENT OF THE KIND ATHERTON MENTIONED. THERE WILL CERTAINLY BE OTHER OCCASIONS. BELIEVE YOU COULD TELL SARKIS THAT IN PRINCIPLE WE WOULD LIKE TO CONSULT WITH THE LEBANESE ON THE TIMING OF ANY SUCH STATEMENT, BUT THAT OCCASIONS MIGHT ARISE WHICH WOULD GIVE US LITTLE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO.

5. HAVE GONE INTO SOME DETAIL ON THIS MATTER SINCE I REALIZE THE SOMEWHAT ABBREVIATED MEMCON OF ATHERTON/AL HAFEZ TALK HAS NOT REACHED YOU AND BECAUSE I THINK YOU COULD GATHER FROM ABOVE DESCRIPTION A BETTER FEEL FOR THE REAL GIVE AND TAKE IN THE SESSION.

6. AFTER DICTATING ABOVE, IT WAS POINTED OUT TO ME THAT AMIN'S QUOTATIONS OF ATHERTON ABOUT SETTLING PALESTINIANS

IN LEBANON MAY HAVE REFLECTED THE EXCHANGE THAT OCCURRED
WHEN AMIN ASKED ABOUT THE SECRETARY'S REMARKS TO THE
EFFECT THAT THE SOUTH LEBANON PROBLEM IS VERY COMPLICATED.
AMIN MENTIONED THE SPECULATION THAT THIS MEANT THE U.S.
WANTED TO RESOLVE LEBANON'S PALESTINIAN PROBLEM BY MAKING
SOUTH LEBANON A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND. ATHERTON OF
COURSE MADE CLEAR THAT THE SECRETARY HAD NO HIDDEN MEAN-
ING IN HIS WORDS, AND MEANT EXACTLY WHAT HE SAID, NO MORE
AND NO LESS. TO SUM UP AGAIN. AMIN SHOULD HAVE COME AWAY
FROM THE MEETING WITH THE BASIC IMPRESSION THAT THE U.S.
DOES NOT HAVE ANY CLEAR AND PRECISE ANSWER TO LEBANON'S
CONCERNS ABOUT ITS PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, EXCEPT IN THE
SENSE THAT WE BELIEVE IT MUST BE RESOLVED WITHIN A
COMPREHENSIVE MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT AND THAT WE INTEND
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THAT LEBANON'S CONCERNS ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ORDER
THAT LEBANON'S INTERESTS WILL NOT SUFFER IN SUCH A SET-
TLEMENT. VANCE

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